

Written Case 2: Piecing it Together

1. What was the underlying problem in this scenario?

◆ Inefficient communication was the underlying problem in this situation. Better communication from the director and among the group members could have prevented/solved the problem before the researchers made their presentation to the Seasile. First and foremost, Ms Anderson should have been clearer about how she wanted the group members to work together. Finally, the problem could have been caught at one of the weekly research meetings if Ms. Anderson had asked for a status report of how the project was coming together.

2. What could Ms. Shaffer, Mrs. Pallano and Dr. Cheng have done to prevent this situation?

◆ Ms. Shaffer and Ms. Pallano should have voiced their concerns to Dr. Cheng or to Mrs. Anderson. But, because they were new in the organization, they both were intimidated and were also victims of groupthink. While both knew that they should make the project more cohesive, neither of them took the initiative, and just decided to “go with the flow”.

◆ Dr. Cheng could have communicated what he was going to present to the Seasile in an in-depth manner when Ms. Pallano asked him. He could have prevented this scenario by acting more as a team player to create a more cohesive atmosphere. Because he has worked in the organization longer than the other two, he should have taken their concerns into consideration and been more cognizant of their roles and work.

3. What role did Ms. Anderson play in creating the problem?

◆ Ms. Anderson helped to create the problem by not providing clear oversight of the project, and not monitoring the progress of the researchers. Because all three employees reported directly to Ms. Anderson, she should have ensured they were coordinating their efforts. If she wanted someone else to coordinate the team’s efforts, she should have made that clear. Ms. Shaffer and Ms. Pallano would have been more likely to report their concerns to Ms Anderson if she had fostered a more communicative environment.

4. What suggestions would you have for assigning or determining leadership roles in a group situation?

◆ There are various ways to assign or determine leadership roles in a team situation, including the following three solutions:

◆ Appointed leadership. In this situation, a member of the group is appointed or assigned by someone of authority to be the group’s leader. This method is often the preferred solution; however, this does not always ensure that all members of the group will “buy in” or view the appointed leader as the actual leader of the group.

◆ Leadership by internal consensus. In this situation, the group chooses or elects a leader, which they can do by voting on a formal leader. However, someone in the group may not be formally chosen or elected, but may at some point become recognized by group members as the informal leader.

◆ Leaderless Group. In some situations, no one is chosen or assigned to serve as the leader; therefore, each member plays an equal part in facilitating meetings and/or making decisions.